



MAMMALS OF LAKE NASH AND GEORGINA DOWNS
STATIONS AND A FIRST RECORD
OF THE NARROW-NOSED PLANIGALE,
PLANIGALE TENUIROSTRIS,
FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

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The distribution of small mammal species in the Northern Territory is poorly known. Parker (1973) details the distributions of known specimens in the Northern Territory up to 1971 and Strahan (1983) provides the latest summary of distributions in Australia.

In August 1984 a resource survey was made of the 8547 km² Lake Nash and 3472 km² Georgina Downs pastoral properties on the south edge of the Mitchell Grass (*Astrebula spp.*) plains of the Barkly Tableland adjacent to the Queensland border (21° 50', 137° 30'). The survey covered the major habitats which include Mitchell Grass/cracking clay plains, *Acacia* shrubland/lateritic hills and Coolibah (*Eucalyptus microtheca*) riparian clay channels. Surveys were made using Elliott and pit trapping, observation of animals and sign, analysis of Barn Owl *Tyto alba* pellets, and gathering museum and literature records.

The species of mammals known to occur currently on Lake Nash and Georgina Downs are shown in Table 1 which also indicates the source of the data.

An interesting, though not unexpected, first collection in the Northern Territory was that of *Planigale tenuirostris*, the Narrow-nosed Planigale. The species' distribution is associated with cracking clay soils in inland N.S.W., Qld and S.A. (Read 1983; Andrew & Settle 1982). Our specimen, comprising two dentaries, was collected from a Barn Owl pellet taken from a hollow Coolibah trunk on the Gordon Creek in the south west of Lake Nash at 21°42', 137° 17' in Tobermorey Land System (Christian *et al*, 1954). The surrounding cracking clay soils were moderately densely vegetated with *Aristida*, and *Sida* spp. and a variety of low forbs and grasses and *Acacia* spp. The creek channel and fringe was heavily vegetated with *Enteropogon* and *Themeda* under Coolibah. While it cannot be certain where the owl had captured the prey, it was probably within several kilometres of the roost tree. Other species collected in the owl pellets at the site were House Mouse *Mus musculus*, Fat-tailed Dunnart *Sminthopsis crassicaudata*, Stripe-faced Dunnart *S. macroura*, and Forrest's Mouse *Leggadina forresti*. The Fat-tailed Dunnart is near the northern limit of known distribution in Australia (Strahan 1983).

The status of the species observed is shown in Table 1. Our rapid reconnaissance survey permitted only a subjective assessment of abundance of species from observations of individuals, tracks and sign. The abundance of Red Kangaroos has increased in the last four or five years according to the Manager. This coincides with Dingo control efforts but also with increased rainfall.

The rumoured presence of the Northern Nailtail Wallaby *Onychogalea unguifera* in Camil and Camilrock Land System on Georgina Downs could not be confirmed. A possible feeding hole of a Greater Bilby *Macrotis lagotis*, in a patch of Yelka (*Cyperus* sp.) suggested that the species may persist at the south of Lake Nash in Warnardo and Tobermorey Land Systems.

No feral pigs, camels, donkeys, horses or cattle occur on the station. This is due to lack of surface waters during the prolonged dry season (apart from bores and dams which can be closed off) which prevents establishment and facilitates control of feral mammals.

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References

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Table 1: Mammals known to occur on Lake Nash and Georgina Downs Station, N.T.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Record Type	Land System; Status
<i>Tachyglossus aculeatus</i>	Short-beaked Echidna	O: dung	Tobermorey; occasional
<i>Planigale tenuirostris</i>	Narrow-nosed Planigale	Owl pellet	Tobermorey;?
<i>Sminthopsis crassicaudata</i>	Fat-tailed Dunnart	Owl pellet	Tobermorey;?
<i>S. macroura</i>	Stripe-faced Dunnart	Owl pellet	Tobermorey;?
<i>Macropus rufus</i>	Red Kangaroo	O	Ag,At,Kl,G,Wd, T; mod. common
<i>Leggadina forresti</i>	Forrest's Mouse	Owl pellet,*	T;?
<i>Mus musculus</i>	House Mouse	C	Cl; common
<i>Notomys alexis</i>	Spinifex Hopping-Mouse	C	Cl; common;
<i>Rattus villosissimus</i>	Long-haired Rat	*	;plague in 1960's, none since 1979
<i>Canis familiaris dingo</i>	Dingo	O *	most;mod.common
<i>Felis catus</i>	Feral Cat	O	Cl,Ck; common
<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	European Rabbit	O	Ag,At,T,Wd,Ck; Sparse

Notes: Symbols used are:

Land Systems:

O - Observed

C - Collected

* - Held in Central

Australian Museum
Collection

Ag - Argadargada

At - Austral

B - Barkly

Ck - Camilrock

Cl - Camil

Kl - Kallala

T - Tobermorey

Wd - Wonardo

G - Georgina